DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 165 035 CG 013 094

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TITLE In-Law Relations: A Research Note.
PUB DATE Oct 77
NOTE 41p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations (San Diego, California, October 12-15, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Tests; *Family Relationship; *Marriage Counseling; Questionnaires; Research Methodology; Research Projects; *Test Construction
IDENTIFIERS *Johnson In Law Study

ABSTRACT

This study completed the initial stages in the development of the Johnson In-Law Attitude Scale, which is an instrument designed to measure attitudes toward one's family of in-laws, both before and during the marriage, and relationships with parents. A thorough review of literature relative to in-laws is included. The study revealed that the entire family of in-laws represents multifaceted and complex relationships which are not easily measured by a small number of items. It also pointed out the need for theory development. The paper explores the methodological considerations and implications of studying in-law relations in terms of the endless possibilities an individual has for in-laws. The attitude scale, while statistically reliable and valid, did not appear to be sensitive to individual family differences, composition, and special situations. The paper suggests alternative means of studying in-laws, as well as future implementation of the Johnson In-Law Attitude Scale. The use of the interview method, given adequate time and other resources, was suggested as a more controllable means of understanding and predicting in-law adjustment. (Author)

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IN-LAW RELATIONS: A RESEARCH NOTE *

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CG 013094

* Paper presented to the Research and Theory Section at the annual meeting of the National Council on Family Relations. San Diego, California, October 1977.

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IN-LAW RELATIONS: A RESEARCH NOTE

Introduction

In-laws have and will continue to be a pervading influence in the lives of married couples, particularly those who are newly married. When a couple marries, a primary developmental task, as well as challenge, is that of adjusting to one another and building a strong loving marital relationship (Riker & Brisbane, 1970). Adjustments become more complex as couples acquire parents-in-law, possibly brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, and readjust their relationships with their own parents. These role adjustments can be potential sources of either frustration and dissatisfaction or support and love in a new marriage.

Although writers and researchers have identified in-laws as a major area of adjustment in marriage (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Bowman, 1970; Kieren, Henton & Marotz, 1975), many family texts devote only scant attention to in-law adjustment (Blood, 1962; Bowman, 1974; Burgess, Locke & Thomes, 1971; Duvall, 1967; Landis, 1975; Leslie, 1967; Nye & Berardo, 1973; Udry, 1974). Saxton (1972) and Burr (1976) do not discuss in-law relations in any part of their books.

One possible explanation for this absence in textbooks is the noticeable paucity of research regarding in-law relationships. To date, this investigator has located nine research studies dealing specifically with in-laws (Bell & Buerkle, 1963; Duvall, 1954; Hoye, 1970; Irving, 1970, 1971; Kanin & Switzer, 1973; Komarovsky, 1956; Marcus, 1951; Stryker, 1955;

Wallin, 1954); only three were conducted within the last decade.

Without current and reliable research, the complexities of in-law relations will remain an enigma in view of today's life styles. The need for a systematic, timely, and sensitive study is not only indicated, but necessary. The solution to this research problem will be inherently difficult, in view of the nature of this multifaceted relationship. Twenty years ago, Komarovsky (1956) recognized in-law relations as a methodological problem, and since that time we have not made great advances in refining research techniques in this area. Writers, counselors, and family life specialists have based opinions and conclusions related to in-laws primarily on research which was conducted twenty years ago. By definition, these studies cannot reflect current values, trends, and life styles.

Trends Affecting In-Law Relations

Brief mention of four factors which may possibly affect in-law relations is warranted. It should be pointed out, however, that these are inferences based on current trends and life styles, unsubstantiated by actual study, and should be treated as such. The four influences are: (1) the prevalence of families who move. Though figures vary, a survey by a major trucking firm indicated that at least 22 percent of people working for corporations will move this year (Daniel, 1977). Other sources estimated that while geographical mobility is slowing down, the rate at which Americans move is still high. For example, in 1976, 17.7 percent of United States residents moved, as compared to 20.1 percent between 1958 - 1961, and 19.1 percent from 1968 - 1971 (Better Living, 1977). As more couples accept occupations a great distance from their family of origin, interaction necessarily declines, which may subsequently result in less conflict. (2) women's role changes. Earlier

studies of in-law relations indicated that a major source of difficulty between in-laws was precipitated by the daughter's dependence on her parents (Komarovsky, 1950; Stryker, 1955; Wallin, 1954). As more women, though certainly not all, are reared to be less dependent on parental guidance and acknowledge their more equal status brought about by women's liberation and other equalization influences, this source of stress may be alleviated. However, advocacy of the women's liberation philosophies brings up another possible source of conflict, a concern too complex to handle within the scope of this paper. (3) rise in the age at time of marriage. Couples are marrying approximately one year later than in the 1950's, according to recent census data. In 1975, males were 23.5 and females were 21.1 years of age (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). In view of the wider acceptance, in fact, increase, of singlehood, this trend can be expected to continue. Research on in-law relationships indicated that in-law problems were more likely to occur among couples who married before the age of 19 than for those who married after age 24 (Landis & Landis, 1968). It is conceivable, then, that this trend will result in fewer in-law difficulties. (4) increase in voluntary childlessness. This has been identified as a source of conflict between the couple and desirous grandparents. Veevers (1975) predicted that more and more couples will choose to remain childless in the future.

Review of Related Literature

While research related to in-laws is admittedly sparse, it is useful in elucidating factors which bear some relationship to the degree of satisfaction or adjustment in in-law relationships. These factors are represented in the content of the rating scale and the preliminary instruments because of their relationship to satisfactory in-law adjustment; previous

findings of their significance served as justification for their inclusion in the instruments. The literature which deals with methods and techniques involved in the development and design of an instrument for measuring attitudes has been covered elsewhere (Johnson, 1976).

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of In-Law Relations

In-laws did not appear to fit neatly and compactly into any one conceptual or theoretical framework, which may be a function of the dearth of systematic and inclusive research. This led to a great deal of speculation in trying to assign some order or pattern to in-law relations. However, Irving (1970) viewed this problem as a major goal of his study. He hypothesized, "Relationships between the couple and their parents-in-law are not random or uniquely determined by individual personalities alone but are patterned in some organized way" (Irving, 1971, p. 92).

Based on the use of psychoanalysis in resolving in-law problems, Bayer (1966) placed this relationship within a three-part psychoanalytic framework. He first hypothesized that early parental attachment may lead one to seek support from his or her parents rather than from one's spouse, resulting in friction between one partner and the parents of the other. This hypothesis was supported by Stryker's (1955) study of parental dependency and in-law relations. Secondly, a spouse who hated his or her parents may subsequently redirect this hatred toward in-laws. Thirdly, from a parent-in-law perspective, a parent may transfer feelings of hatred toward his or her children to the son-in-law or daughter-in-law.

Kanin and Switzer (1973) indicated some difficulty in testing Bayer's second hypothesis due to the low frequency of respondents who expressed an "absence of love for their parents. Only 18.3 percent of the sample

indicated no degree of love for their fathers, and even fewer, 8.2 percent, reported a lack of love for their mothers" (p. 24).

General Factors in In-Law Adjustment

This section will focus on the findings of previous research which have specified certain factors associated with satisfactory or unsatisfactory in-law relationships.

Age at time of marriage. Younger couples were more likely to experience in-law problems than older couples (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Landis & Landis, 1968; Landis, 1975). In their study of 544 student couples, Landis and Landis found an increase in in-law adjustment as age at time of marriage increased. Fourty-five percent of the couples who married between ages 17 and 19 reported excellent relationships with their in-laws, as did 51 percent of those married between ages 20 and 21, 60 percent of those married between ages 22 and 23, and 63 percent of those married at 24 years of age and older (Landis & Landis, 1968).

In contrast to this, Stryker (1955) found no significant relationship between age of the married couple and adjustment to parents. The same was true of number of years married; in his sample, the correlations between number of years married and adjustment to parents approached zero.

Financial assistance. Younger couples were more likely to be financially dependent upon their parents, at least during the first years of marriage (Landis & Landis, 1968). Research seemed to indicate that couples who shared a residence with their parents or parents-in-law were more likely to experience in-law difficulty than those who were financially independent (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Komarovsky, 1962; Landis & Landis, 1968; Marcus, 1951).

While after World War II, 9 percent of all couples shared a residence with relatives, only 1 percent of the couples today chose to do so (Glick, 1975).

Sussman (1953, 1962) pioneered much of the research concerning the dynamics of helping patterns of middle-class parents to married children. Some of his significant findings were: (1) Parents desired the friendship and interaction with their married children, and felt that children truly wanted the assistance. (2) Financial aid was clearly from parents to children during the first years of marriage, in the form of furniture, household and kitchen equipment, and help in the purchase of a home, etc. In return, parents expected affection, inclusion in activities, and personal attention. (3) Parents often had to use indirect methods of helping so as not to leave the impression to the son- or daughter-in-law that they were usurping the spousal role. (4) Parental aid to children has not replaced the financial autonomy of the nuclear family, only weakened it somewhat.

Parental dependence. Prompted by Komarovsky's (1950) hypothesis that in-law difficulties involved the wife's parents as a function of her greater attachment and dependency upon her parents, Stryker (1955) developed an instrument for and subsequently tested her hypothesis. His findings relative to parental dependence indicated that: (1) Adjustment to a parent increased with dependence upon that parent. (2) Females were more likely to be dependent upon their mothers than males were to their mothers. (3) The husband's adjustment to in-laws was independent of the wife's adjustment to her parents. (4) The husband's adjustment to the mother-in-law was negatively related to his wife's dependence upon her mother. (5) The husband's adjustment to the father-in-law was positively related to his wife's dependence upon her father. (6) The impact of the wife's dependency on the

husband's adjustment was specific to the parent on whom the wife was dependent. In short, these findings supported her hypothesis that wives were significantly more dependent upon their mothers than were the husbands upon their mothers.

Wallin (1954) also tested Komarovsky's (1950) dependency hypohesis and found that wives were homesick more often than males (11.3% of females and 2.8% of males) and that 40% of the wives and 21.5% of the husbands saw their parents two or three times a week (the difference here could be a function of geographical proximity, which is discussed in a later section of this paper); both of these differences were significant beyond the .001 level of confidence. Wallin took care to note that he was referring to "attachment" and not "dependency"; one term does not necessarily imply the other.

Hoye (1971) replicated Stryker's study, combined with the Locke-Wallace (1959) short form of the "Marital-Adjustment Test", in an unpublished doctoral dissertation. She sought to determine the relationships, if any, between marital adjustment, adjustment to mothers-in-law, and dependence on their own parents. Relative to dependence, she found: (1) Husbands who were dependent upon their fathers were less capable of making satisfactory marital adjustment. (2) Husbands who were dependent upon their fathers were more likely to experience difficulty in adjusting to their mother-in-law. (3) Men who were dependent upon their mothers were also dependent upon their fathers. The implications of Hoye's insignificant data, elaborated elsewhere, provide additional insight into changes in parental dependence (Johnson, 1976).

In 1962, Komarovsky further tested parental dependence as a significant source of in-law difficulty in her classic study of the lower

socioeconomic groups, Blue Collar Marriage. She stated:

> Emotional dependence increases the potency of other disturbing conditions. A dependent wife tends to create situations in which the husband's will is pitted against the will of his mother-in-law. When the wife is under the influence of her mother, a disagreement between her mother and her husband leads to in-law conflict in areas in which a couple must make joint decisions. With a dependent wife, consequently, it becomes more important for the husband and his mother-in-law to be congenial. Conflict is minimized to the extend that the couple makes few joint decisions, either because roles are segregated or because life is routinized. (Komarovsky, 1962, p. 269)

The preceding has implications for reexamining the role of dependence in marital relations.

Marital satisfaction and adjustment. Couples who indicated happy and satisfying marital relations were more likely to get along with their in-laws than those with unsatisfactory marital relations (Hoye, 1971; Komarovsky, 1962; Landis & Landis, 1968; Marcus, 1951). In their study of 544 student couples, Landis and Landis (1968) found that of the couples with excellent in-law adjustments, 67% rated their marriages as very happy, while of those couples who rated their in-law adjustments as fair or poor, only 18% classified their marriages as very happy. In addition, engaged couples believed they had more agreement on in-laws than the married, divorced, or couples who were having counseling.

Hoye's (1971) findings relative to marital adjustment included: (1) Husbands who could form satisfactory relationships with their wives could also form satisfactory relationships with their mother-in-law. (2) For females, the longer they were married, the less likely they were to rate their marriage as well adjusted; this relationship did not hold for males. (3) When women rated their marital realtionship as happy and adjusted, their husbands were more likely to make satisfactory adjustments to their mothers-in-law. (4) When men rated their marital adjustment as good, their wives were also likely to do so.

Komarovsky (1962) found a rather surprising relationship between marital happiness and in-law adjustment. Using a sample of lower educated blue-collar families, she expected to find a positive relationship between the two, but in fact, found that "there are more unhappy marriages among men with 'average' than among those with 'strained' in-law relations" (p. 279). Two possible explanations for this paradox dealt with the overall characteristics of average in-law relations, as outlined by Komarovsky: (1) either the husband enjoys a normal, satisfying, though at times irritating relationship with his in-laws; or (2) he keeps them at an arms-length, visiting only when necessary or required. The latter could be a result of marital strain, and could explain why a strained marriage could also yield an average in-law relationship (based on the reasoning that a certain degree of interaction would be necessary for conflicts to arise).

Number of years married. Blood and Wolfe (1960) indicated that in-law conflicts seemed to decrease over the family life cycle, indicating a positive relationship between number of years married and in-law adjustment. This general decline in in-law problems decreased from the honeymoon period

(15% expressed disagreement) to the retired and post-parental period (only 2% expressed disagreement). A noteable exception existed for couples who were childless, where 10% expressed disagreement (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). This finding led this investigator to surmise that most parents-in-law desired to become grandparents, and their insistence in that direction may be a continuous source of difficulty.

Factors in family background. Burgess and Cottrell (1939) noted that marriage partners who have similar backgrounds have fewer instances of unhappiness in their marriage. As demonstrated previously, in-laws were a significant factor in marital adjustment, and therefore, it seemed reasonable to assume that similarity in background would affect likewife in-law adjustment. This assumption has been borne out by research on in-law relations (Komarovsky, 1962; Landis & Landis, 1968; Marcus, 1951).

Similarity in education was an important factor, in that, for males, marriage to a better-educated wife was associated with in-law conflict (Komarovsky, 1962; Marcus, 1951).

Another frequent source of conflict was that of the similarity of religious background. Both Landis and Landis (1968) and Marcus (1951) found that couples of the same religion were less likely to experience unsatisfactory in-law relationships.

Premarital factors in the couple's background played in instrumental role in in-law adjustments (Burr, 1973). They may be summarized as follows: (1) a significant positive relationship between the wife's education for marriage and in-law adjustment; (2) a positive relationship between parental approval of future spouse and in-law adjustment; (3) a positive relationship between meeting the future in-laws before marriage and subsequent in-law

adjustment; and (4) a positive relationship between the amount of friendliness upon meeting of parents and future son- or daughter-in-law and subsequent in-law adjustment (Burr, 1973; Marcus, 1951).

Source of in-law difficulty. Probably the greatest bulk of research related to in-laws has dealt with determining the source and direction of in-law difficulty. Duvall (1954) reported that of the 74.2% who named in-laws as a source of difficulty, 36.8% named the mother-in-law as most difficult. In second place, she found the sister-in-law named by 20.3%, followed by the brother-in-law (5.4%), father-in-law (5%), daughter-in-law (3%), and son-in-law (less than 1%). This is an overwhelming indication of both direction and source of difficulty: from offspring to mother-in-law. This investigator, however, could not determine from her data the relationship of the person who expressed or perceived the difficulty, an important factor in studying in-law relationships.

Regressing for a moment, it is important at this stage to restate Komarovsky's (1950) dependency hypotheses because of their relationship to the source of difficulty. First, due to the sheltered and dependent methods of childrearing in our culture, the wife was more attached to and dependent upon her parents than the husband was to his parents. Second, this dependence on the parental family carried over into one's marriage, the wife giving second priority to husband and children. Accordingly, in-law difficulties more frequently involved the wife's parents than the husband's, her dependence acting as a source of antagonism between husband and parents-in-law.

Komarovsky (1950) noted that our culture rears females to be more dependent upon and attached to their parents. Females were trained to have fewer opportunities to assert themselves, fewer moments of privacy, to carry

out the kinship obligations of the family, and to be less independent in decision-making. All of these traits proved to be dysfunctional in a marital situation where she was expected to transfer this dependence from her parents to her husband. As a result, the wife remained somewhat dependent upon her parents, divided her loyalty between spouse and parent, and thus created in-law difficulties between spouse and mother-in-law.

Following publication of her analysis, several researchers attempted to test her hypotheses. In 1954, Wallin, with a sample of couples married three to five years, found greater attachment to parents for the females, as mentioned previously. His findings, however, did not suggest support for Komarovsky's second hypothesis, instead, males gave evidence of a favorable attitude toward their in-laws as a strengthening force. In fact, women were more likely to dislike their mothers-in-law than men.

While few studies have been able to refute Komarovsky's first hypothesis, several research reports have found evidence contrary to her findings as to the source of difficulty.

Landis and Landis (1968) also found a feminine direction in their research: for wives, 50% reported difficulties with the mother-in-law, 11% with the father-in-law, 6% with the brother-in-law, 13% with the sister-in-law, and 20% with two or more in-laws; for husbands, they reported 42%, 15%, 3%, 16%, and 24%, respectively.

Irving (1970) found that although there was more interaction with the wives' mothers, the greatest amount of conflict was with the husbands' mothers.

Residential propinquity and patterns of interaction. It was reasonable to assume that, in general, families who lived within close proximity

of one another would encounter more frequent interactions. It is relevant at this point to consider residential propinquity and frequency of interaction as it relates to in-law adjustment.

Wallin (1954) found that wives saw their parents significantly more often than husbands ($p < .001$); 40% of the wives saw their parents two or three times a week, whereas only 21.5% of the husbands did so at the same rate. There was no indication here of residential propinquity for either partner, which would be reflected in the frequency of their interaction.

Irving (1971), in his study of in-law relations of Toronto lower-middle-class couples, found that 86.1% of his sample had either parents or parents-in-law or both living in the Toronto area; furthermore, couples indicated that they preferred it this way. Visitation patterns revealed that 75% of the couples visited their parents weekly or more often, and nearly 39% wished they could see their parents more often than they did.

Need for New Methodology

Komarovsky (1956), whose dependency hypothesis was tested and found to be inadequate in terms of indicating the source of in-law difficulty, maintained that the problem is largely a methodological one. She stated:

> As to methods, some advance has been made in the clarification of the meaning of concepts and the development of indices and measures. Indeed, this methodological advance made possible the crucial test of our hypothesis. The presence or absence of in-law trouble and the side of the family involved proved too crude a test, reflecting the net effect of several processes. . . In other words, the hypothesis could be tested when we found a

method of ascertaining the degrees to which certain attitudes and relationships obtained. (Komarovsky, 1956, p. 47)

Aldous (1967), after studying the kinship patterns in three generations, concluded that "at this point kinship interaction research need no longer be restricted to descriptive studies, but can be designed at the outset to test a priori hypotheses which stem from more abstract concepts" (p. 249). A priori hypotheses cannot be confidently utilized unless one has a reasonable expectation that certain relationships do in fact exist for in-laws.

Cohen and Hodges (1963), in their studies of lower-blue-collar families, also indicated the need for more sensitive research. They stated, "It would seem that much intensive research is needed on aspects of kinship that have not been adequately tapped by statistical studies to date. The available studies do not tell us much about the relative importance of kin exchange and interaction, about their place within the total resource and security systems of the populations studied" (p. 311).

Methods and Procedures

Due to the methodological nature of this study, many of the procedures are included in the section containing the findings and interpretations of the data. Those included in this section are: (1) The In-Law Rating Scale; and (2) The Preliminary In-Law Attitude Scale.

The In-Law Rating Scale

The development of the in-law rating scale entailed the following steps: (1) Preparation of the questions; (2) Administration of the rating scale; and (3) Statistical analysis of the rating scale.

Preparation of the questions. A thorough review of the literature related to in-laws and direct conversations with married couples concerning their relationships with in-laws enabled the investigator to develop 304 items regarding attitudes toward in-laws. Statements were designed to encompass several aspects of in-law relations, such as the mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and factors associated with satisfactory or unsatisfactory in-law relations, such as dependence, children and childrearing, premarital relations, and parental relations. While all 304 items did not deal specifically with in-laws, the literature indicated that these factors represented total adjustment to in-laws. For this reason, questions of this nature were judged to be important by the investigator and therefore included in the rating scale.

No attempt was made to equalize the number of statements in each category or the number of positive, negative, and neutral statements in the questionnaire. The 304 items subsequently comprised the In-Law Rating Scale.

Administration of the rating scale. The in-law rating scale was administered to 33 selected professionals in the behavioral sciences who had agreed to serve as judges to evaluate the items in the rating scale. Responses were obtained from 28 judges, including 16 human development and family life professionals, seven graduate students in the behavioral and social sciences, four social work professionals, and one professor of consumer sciences. Four respondents did not return the rating scale, and one was judged to be incorrectly completed due to misinterpretation of instructions.

The rating scale, based on a continuum from one to five, was a form of the Thurstone-Scale of Equal Appearing Intervals for measuring attitudes (Thurstone, 1928). The judges were asked to classify each statement

according to the degree of positive or negative attitude toward in-law relations being expressed by each statement. They were further instructed to express their impersonal opinion concerning the content of each item, ranging from strongly negative (one) through neutral (three) to strongly positive (five). The judges were specifically instructed not to indicate their own personal attitudes toward their in-laws, rather, to evaluate each item on the basis of whether the expressed attitude was positive or negative. Judges were supplied with two optical scan sheets on which to indicate their responses.

After the scale was administered to several judges, it became apparent to the investigator that the printed instructions were not entirely clear. Therefore, the investigator made additional oral instructions and clarifications to subsequent raters and notified other raters of these changes, which were as indicated below:

1. Certain statements included in the scale pertain to parental relationships, as opposed to in-law relationships, because the literature has indicated that they represented an integral part of in-law adjustment. Therefore, such statements were included and should also be rated on their degree of positive or negative content as is true of those statements which relate specifically to in-laws.

2. One limiting factor in determining relationships is that kinship terminology does not allow us to differentiate between sisters- and brothers-in-law; the terms themselves do not imply or specify the relationship. Therefore, questions applying to these relationships were referred to as "my spouse's brother," or "my sister and my spouse," etc. Furthermore, even this limits our ability to distinguish in that one's spouse may have more than one sister or brother.

The completed rating scales were taken to The University of Alabama Testing Service where they were key punched for statistical analysis at The University of Alabama Computer Center.

Statistical Analysis of the rating scale. The judges' ratings of the 304 items in the in-law rating scale were analyzed by the SPEC 12 Successive-Intervals Thurstone Scaling (Barker, 1973) on a 1110 Univac Computer.

The Preliminary In-Law Attitude Scale

The development of the preliminary scale involved the following steps: (1) Preparation of the questions; (2) Administration of the preliminary in-law attitude scale; and (3) Statistical analysis of the preliminary in-law attitude scale.

Preparation of the questions. On the basis of an analysis of the ratings of the 304 items on the rating scale, 130 items were retained. (This represented the maximum number of variables which can be factor analyzed by the CORR 12 computer program.) These 130 Likert items comprised the Preliminary In-Law Attitude Scale. This scale also included 25 demographic items developed from the findings of previous research on in-law satisfaction and adjustment; they were included to formulate hypotheses for future research.

Based on comments by several raters, the investigator decided to revise five of the statements from the original rating scale to further reduce ambiguity and still retain the meaning of the statements. After consulting five of the raters, it was decided that the two criteria were met for these five statements. The items changed and a discussion of those changes are covered elsewhere (Johnson, 1976).

The investigator constructed two sets of instructions, one for subjects who have not had prior experience in using optical scan sheets and who were to answer on the questionnaire, another for subjects who have experience in using optical scan sheets and who were to indicate their responses on optical scan sheets.

Administration of the preliminary in-law attitude scale. The Preliminary In-Law Attitude Scale, consisting of 25 demographic questions and 130 Likert items retained from the judges ratings, was administered to 227 subjects during March 1976. A more detailed description of the sample is provided elsewhere (Johnson, 1976).

Subjects were allowed to complete the questionnaire annonymously, and anyone who did not wish to complete the questionnaire was exempted. The study was limited to those persons who had at least one living parent-in-law. The time required to complete the preliminary in-law attitude scale varied from 15 to 40 minutes.

In addition to the instructions given with the questionnaire, the investigator gave the following oral instructions to respondents:

1. In order to fill out this questionnaire, you must have at least one living parent-in-law.

2. If the parent-in-law has been dead only a short time, but was alive during most of your marriage, you may answer the questions which apply to that parent-in-law.

3. If your spouse has more than one sister or brother, you may choose one of them and respond consistently throughout the questionnaire according to your relationship with that one.

4. This questionnaire pertains to your present marriage. If you

have been divorced and are presently remarried, answer in terms of your present marriage and in-laws.

5. If you have any questions or are involved in some type of special situation, I will be happy to clarify questions for you.

The information from the subjects who indicated their responses on the questionnaire iteself were transferred onto optical scan sheets. Then each of the subjects was assigned an identification number and code.

Statistical analysis of the preliminary in-law attitude scale. The data for the 130 Likert items were analyzed on a 1110 Univac Computer using the CORR 12 Factor Analysis of Large Data Matrices (Barker, 1973). The 25 demographic items were not included in the analysis. For the purpose of this study, the demographic items would be used later in establishing norms for future study. Factor analysis eliminated 29 items which failed to load at .5000 or greater on only one factor. The remaining 101 items were tested for reliability, correlation to subscale, and correlation to total test by the SPEC 07 Item Analysis and Test Reliability program (Barker, 1973).

Findings and Interpretations of the Data

As no conclusions were drawn from the data concerning in-laws per se, the findings of this study deal with methodological procedures and implications.

The Thurstone Scale of Equal Appearing Intervals

The Thurstone technique required that the panel of 28 judges classify each attitude statement contained in the original 304-item questionnaire along a continuum ranging from "negative" through "neutral" to "positive." This procedure measured the degree of ambiguity in each attitude statement.

Ambiguity of an item was determined by the spread of the judges ratings along a one to five continuum quantitatively known as Q.

The median value and Q value were computed for each statement by the SPEC 12 Successive Intervals-Thurstone Scaling Technique (Barker, 1973). Both were plotted on a two-way graph, the median values being plotted on the baseline and the Q values on the vertical axis (Edwards, 1957). The Q values of the 304 items ranged from .3 to .9.

In order to reduce the number of items from 304 to 130, the maximum number of variables the factor analysis program will handle, and limit the number of neutral items on the preliminary scale (Edwards, 1946), the investigator decided not to draw a horizontal line through a Q value, and accept all items that fell below that line. Rather, the criteria for accepting an item varied according to the median value and the frequency distribution of items. All items with a median value of 1.1 through 1.8 had a Q of .5 or less. Items with a median value of 1.9 through 3.9 had a Q of .3 or less. Items with a median value of 4.0 through 4.1 had a Q of .4 or less. Items with a median value of 4.2 through 5.0 had a Q of .5 or less. Using this analysis, 130 items were retained for the Preliminary In-Law Attitude Scale. A summary of the Q scale, and median values for the 130 items is presented in Table 1.

Factor Analysis of the Preliminary Data

The analysis of the preliminary instrument consisted of (1) the Likert Scale (Anastasi, 1968); (2) the CORR 12 Factor Analysis of Large Data Matrices technique (Barker, 1973); and (3) the SPEC 07 Item Analysis and Test Reliability technique (Barker, 1973).

Subjects were requested to indicate the degree of their agreement or disagreement to each statement on a five point Likert scale. The

Table 1

Summary of The Q, Scale, and Median Values
For The 130 Item Preliminary In-Law Attitude Scale

Item	Q Value	Scale Value	Median Value
1	.4	3.76	4.8
2	.4	4.05	4.8
3	.4	4.15	4.8
4	.3	2.19	3.1
5	.5	.11	1.6
6	.5	.28	1.7
7	.5	3.96	4.7
8	.3	-.67	1.2
9	.3	3.01	4.0
10	.3	2.62	4.0
11	.3	.26	1.9
12	.3	2.94	4.0
13	.5	-.01	1.6
14	.3	4.57	5.0
15	.5	.23	1.7
16	.5	3.13	4.3
17	.5	3.39	4.4
18	.3	3.29	4.1
19	.5	3.41	4.2
20	.5	-.10	1.4
21	.5	3.41	4.3
22	.4	-.09	1.2
23	.5	.51	1.3
24	.3	2.94	4.1
25	.5	-.10	1.4
26	.5	3.11	4.8
27	.4	3.01	4.2
28	.5	3.41	4.2
29	.5	-.45	1.3
30	.5	-.07	1.3
31	.5	.01	1.4
32	.5	.47	1.2
33	.5	.71	1.3
34	.5	.07	1.5
35	.5	3.59	4.4
36	.5	-.06	1.5
37	.5	3.70	4.5
38	.5	.23	1.7
39	.3	3.37	4.1
40	.5	.24	1.5
41	.3	3.10	4.0
42	.5	3.47	4.6

Table 1--continued

Item	Q Value	Scale Value	Median Value
43	.5	3.17	4.6
44	.5	.34	1.8
45	.3	2.42	3.9
46	.5	2.96	4.2
47	.3	1.55	2.9
48	.5	.11	1.6
49	.5	-.04	1.3
50	.5	.43	1.7
51	.5	.36	1.7
52	.5	3.47	4.6
53	.3	3.98	4.8
54	.5	.14	1.3
55	.5	.32	1.8
56	.5	3.08	4.3
57	.3	2.19	3.1
58	.5	.58	1.7
59	.5	.10	1.7
60	.5	.46	1.8
61	.5	.15	1.7
62	.5	3.15	4.5
63	.3	3.03	4.0
64	.5	3.19	4.6
65	.3	3.37	4.1
66	.3	.01	1.2
67	.3	.64	1.9
68	.5	-.25	1.4
69	.4	-.55	1.2
70	.5	-.17	1.4
71	.3	-.25	1.1
72	.5	3.36	4.4
73	.5	-.04	1.7
74	.5	3.92	4.7
75	.5	-.36	1.3
76	.5	-.09	1.4
77	.5	3.61	4.4
78	.5	3.49	4.2
79	.4	3.65	4.2
80	.5	3.48	4.3
81	.4	3.50	4.2
82	.5	3.10	4.4
83	.5	-.11	1.6
84	.3	1.08	1.9
85	.5	-.17	1.4
86	.5	3.39	4.2
87	.5	3.51	4.5

Table 1--continued

Item	Q Value	Scale Value	Median Value
88	.5	3.75	4.6
89	.5	.11	1.4
90	.4	3.54	4.2
91	.3	2.95	4.1
92	.3	1.08	1.9
93	.5	3.46	4.7
94	.3	.01	1.2
95	.4	3.24	4.2
96	.4	3.01	4.2
97	.4	.21	1.8
98	.3	1.73	3.0
99	.5	3.64	4.6
100	.3	1.27	2.9
101	.5	-.18	1.5
102	.3	3.84	4.8
103	.4	.79	1.8
104	.4	.58	1.2
105	.5	.65	1.3
106	.5	.45	1.3
107	.3	1.42	2.9
108	.5	3.49	4.2
109	.5	3.76	4.4
110	.5	3.13	4.2
111	.3	1.85	2.9
112	.5	4.05	4.7
113	.3	1.42	2.9
114	.5	-.01	1.2
115	.3	3.22	4.0
116	.3	3.32	4.1
117	.5	3.90	4.6
118	.5	3.89	4.5
119	.3	2.82	4.1
120	.5	.11	1.6
121	.5	.07	1.5
122	.3	.55	1.9
123	.5	.34	1.8
124	.5	3.71	4.3
125	.5	3.69	4.3
126	.3	2.08	3.1
127	.3	3.24	4.1
128	.3	1.45	2.9
129	.3	3.12	4.0
130	.3	1.50	2.9

responses were expressed according to the following categories: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral or undecided (?), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). These alternative responses were then assigned a value on a one to five scale, such that the response "strongly agree" to a favorable or positive statement would receive a score of five; the response "strongly disagree" to an unfavorable or negative statement would also receive a score of five. A subject's score was obtained by summing the item response values for each alternative response (Anastasi, 1968). A high score indicated a positive or satisfactory in-law relationship. Conversely, a low score indicated a negative or unsatisfactory in-law relationship.

Factor analysis is a refined statistical technique which allows the investigator to reduce the number of variables or dimensions of a test by identifying common traits of each item and clustering them into one factor or dimension. As Anastasi (1968) states:

> After the factors have been identified, they can be utilized in describing the factorial composition of a test. Each test can thus be characterized in terms of the major factors determining its scores, together with the weight or loading of each factor. Such factor loadings also represent the correlations of the test with each factor, a correlation known as <u>factorial validity</u>. . . It should be noted that factorial validity is essentially the correlation of the test with whatever is common to a group of tests or other indices of behaviors. (pp. 116 - 117)

The CORR 12 Factor Analysis of Large Data Matrices Technique (Barker, 1973) recorded the eigenvalues of each factor to indicate the amount of variance being extracted by each root or factor. Eigenvalues were plotted

on the Cattell Scree Test to separate factors graphically so that only those factors that account for the greatest percentage of variance were retained (Barker, 1976). Results from the scree test are presented in Figure 1.

From the scree test, the investigator determined eight factors which accounted for 52% of the variance. The data were subsequently re-factored to determine the loadings of each item on those eight factors. Only those items which loaded .5000 or higher on only one factor were retained; accordingly, 29 items were eliminated, leaving a total of 101 items.

The investigator identified the eight factors according to the content of each item and assigned the following names to each factor (in order of the heaviest loading): (1) Positive Relationship with Mother-in-law and Parents-in-law; (2) Father-in-law; (3) Negative Relationship with Mother-in-law; (4) Spouse's Sister; (5) Spouse's Positive Relationship with Parents-in-law; (6) Spouse's Brother; (7) Children and Childrearing; and (8) Spouse. The characteristics of each factor are presented in Table 2.

Item Analysis of the Preliminary In-Law Attitude Scale

Following the factor analysis of the 130 items, the 101 remaining items were analyzed by the SPEC 07 Item Analysis and Test Reliability program to determine item discrimination, test reliability, and to establish norms (Barker, 1973). The criterion set for defining an item as reliable was .3000 for the r (total) and r (scale). R (total) represents the correlation of the item to the total test; r (scale) represents the correlation of the item to its factor or subscale. Several items correlated low with the total test, however, their correlation to their subscale was high. The investigator was advised that when subscales have been defined, the major concern is how the item correlates with its subscale (Barker, 1976). Three

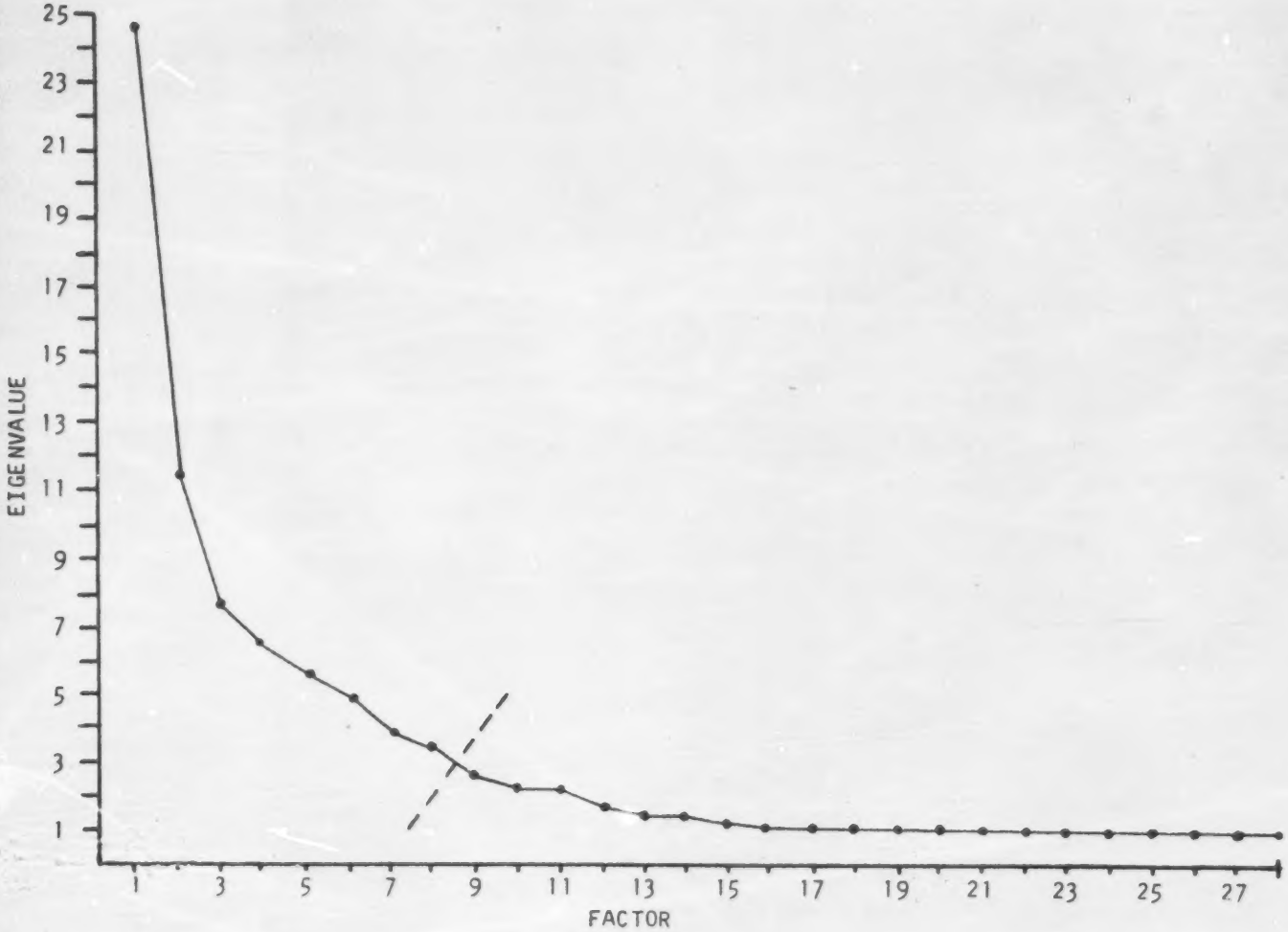

Figure 1

Summary of Scree Test

Table 2

Characteristics of Each Factor and Total Test

Factor	Name	Eigenvalue	Number of Items	Kuder Richardson Coefficient
1	Positive Relationship with Mother-in-law and Parents-in-law	24.68	32	.9675
2	Father-in-law	11.39	15	.8965
3	Negative Relationship with Mother-in-law	7.67	18	.9325
4	Spouse's Sister	6.57	9	.8632
5	Spouse's Positive Relationship with Parents-in-law	5.42	7	.9225
6	Spouse's Brother	4.89	6	.7679
7	Children and Child-rearing	3.82	7	.5186
8	Spouse	3.35	4	.7925
9	Total Test		98	.9653

items failed to meet this requirement and were subsequently eliminated. The 98 remining items were again analyzed to determine the Kuder-Richardson-20 reliability, a form of the split-halves reliability, for each factor and the total test. This measure of reliability indicates the average of all Spearman-Brown correlation coefficients when the test is split into all possible split-halves. When the items on the total test, and in this case, each factor, have high intercorrelations with each other and are measuring the same trait or attribute, then the reliability coefficient will be high. If the intercorrelations are low, either because of error or because the items measure different traits, the reliability coefficient will be low (Ferguson, 1976). The reliabilities for each factor and the total test are presented in Table 2. The correlations of each item to its subscale and the total test are presented in Table 3.

It should be noted that after the second item analysis, item 83 failed to reach the previously established criterion of an r greater than .3000. This is explained by the fact that the three items deleted from the first item analysis fell on factor two (father-in-law), as did item 83. Removing them from the subscale subsequently lowered the correlation of that item to its scale and the total test. The investigator decided to retain the item based on the subjective opinion that it represented an important aspect of one's relationship with the father-in-law.

Conclusions

Within the limitations of this study, the investigator made the following conclusions:

1. In its final form of 98 items, the Johnson In-Law Attitude Scale appears to be a reliable measure of attitudes toward in-laws.

Table 3

Summary of Final Item Analysis
for Items Retained from Factor Analysis

Item	Scale	Mean	Sigma	R(Total)	R(Scale)
1	1	2.74	1.284	.6822	.7721
2	1	2.74	1.138	.6207	.6869
3	1	2.33	1.177	.6951	.7519
4	4	2.91	.927	.3655	.7319
5	1	2.74	1.230	.7384	.7821
6	3	2.83	.944	.5364	.5750
7	2	2.59	.991	.5246	.6973
8	6	3.10	1.024	.3455	.5667
9	3	2.80	.977	.2396	.4432
10	1	2.77	1.120	.6132	.7035
11	2	2.71	.819	.2602	.5046
12	1	2.43	1.098	.6742	.7389
13	2	2.74	.750	.2793	.4568
14	7	2.47	1.131	.3375	.5765
15	1	2.77	1.266	.6123	.6610
16	4	3.41	1.185	.2032	.6367
17	1	2.89	1.346	.6105	.6888
18	3	2.84	.962	.5367	.6817
19	3	2.78	.942	.5788	.7034
20	6	3.27	.977	.2823	.6204
21	1	2.81	1.088	.5964	.6840
22	5	2.28	1.032	.3018	.8187
23	1	2.16	1.022	.7037	.7415
24	7	3.27	.995	.4952	.5890
25	4	2.79	.796	.3336	.6197
26	3	2.91	1.068	.7045	.6925
27	3	2.85	1.086	.5430	.7010
28	3	2.71	.907	.6065	.6930
29	3	3.30	1.258	.6643	.7664
30	7	2.65	.938	.2761	.5036
31	3	2.90	.962	.6477	.7454
32	1	2.33	1.116	.7238	.8160
33	1	2.94	1.211	.6169	.7010
34	3	2.85	.947	.4103	.5704
35	2	2.78	.909	.3517	.7057
36	5	2.74	1.065	.3340	.8591
37	1	2.17	.817	.5242	.5514
38	4	2.99	.826	.3637	.7335
39	2	2.93	1.043	.4001	.5520
40	3	3.49	1.309	.5749	.7334
41	1	2.08	.983	.6530	.7020

Table 3--continued

Item	Scale	Mean	Sigma	R(Total)	R(Scale)
42	2	2.83	.994	.5320	.7753
43	3	2.90	1.002	.6320	.6272
44	1	2.53	1.155	.5080	.5705
45	8	2.93	1.179	.4235	.8427
46	3	3.11	1.235	.5630	.7346
47	5	2.35	1.057	.2667	.8680
48	5	2.33	.994	.2916	.8858
49	2	2.98	.975	.3512	.6644
50	3	3.21	1.109	.5775	.7154
51	3	3.11	1.199	.6402	.6570
52	1	2.76	.919	.6511	.6291
53	8	2.83	1.065	.4520	.8189
54	4	2.36	.953	.3515	.7733
55	8	2.79	.996	.3429	.8035
56	1	2.19	1.137	.6988	.7172
57	6	2.78	.846	.2954	.6548
58	4	2.36	.948	.3223	.7461
59	1	2.15	1.043	.5135	.5875
60	2	2.57	.914	.5200	.8002
61	5	2.71	1.079	.2835	.7936
62	2	3.05	.954	.4496	.6689
63	1	2.26	1.054	.6428	.7260
64	1	2.70	1.074	.4576	.5193
65	1	2.46	1.046	.7398	.8376
66	4	3.16	.908	.3519	.6865
67	2	.244	.934	.4812	.7273
68	4	2.85	.866	.3280	.6432
69	2	2.81	1.072	.4395	.7786
70	1	3.05	1.123	.7148	.7280
71	5	2.52	1.008	.3361	.8778
72	1	3.15	1.144	.6123	.7038
73	7	3.49	1.120	.1447	.4007
74	7	2.62	.668	.1819	.4065
75	5	2.00	.853	.3369	.6706
76	1	2.76	.898	.6767	.6292
77	3	2.90	1.038	.6698	.8052
78	3	3.06	1.067	.6636	.7984
79	6	2.52	.804	.1934	.7317
80	1	2.20	1.017	.7607	.8546
81	1	2.12	.849	.7355	.7588
82	1	2.68	1.125	.7015	.8037
83	2	3.38	1.101	.1674	.2835
84	3	3.13	1.011	.5466	.6468
85	6	2.71	.857	.2068	.7797

Table 3--continued

Item	Scale	Mean	Sigma	R(Total)	R(Scale)
86	1	1.92	.772	.6561	.6973
87	1	2.21	.910	.7269	.7764
88	1	2.00	.788	.6734	.7212
89	4	2.25	.835	.3226	.6946
90	6	2.96	.767	.2142	.6771
91	2	3.21	.983	.2730	.5621
92	1	3.07	1.002	.7033	.6871
93	8	3.47	1.250	.0605	.6979
94	2	2.38	.984	.4636	.7348
95	1	2.30	.966	.7529	.8301
96	2	2.82	.941	.3975	.7054
97	7	3.07	.802	.1497	.5633
98	7	3.08	.836	.2107	.5454

2. According to the criteria established by Anastasi (1968), the instrument appears to be valid in terms of content. Content validity indicates that the questionnaire covers the content area prescribed before preparing the test; it requires a thorough search and examination of relevant research in the area of study. As noted previously, the investigator constructed items which apply in all aspects of in-law relations based on a review of literature and direct conversations with married couples.

3. One form of construct validity was established through a factor analysis of the preliminary data. Anastasi (1968) explained that this procedure identifies and describes the factorial composition of a test and thus establishes factorial validity of the test.

4. The presentation of the final form, consisting of 98 items, is easily administerable in 20 minutes to a wide cross section of people.

5. In-laws represent a multifaceted type of relationship which cannot be measured easily by a small number of items.

In-Laws as a Research Problem

Throughout this study and the development of the instrument, certain methodological implications and barriers became apparent to the investigator. Furthermore, subsequent to its completion, the investigator was able to review the study and evaluate it more objectively in terms of approach, method, content, reliability, and validity. As previously indicated, statistical requirements were reasonably satisfied according to established criteria, both by noteable references and recognized sources of statistical expertise. However, the diligent and conscientious researcher, after re-examining the aforementioned requirements, may feel that other methods may have been more suited to the problem at hand. This is not to imply that this

investigator is attempting to impeach or discount the value or merit of the study. Rather, the purpose is to develop an objective approach. A brief example illustrates the point. For years, family researchers studied marital satisfaction in an effort to develop a systematic, reliable, valid, and abbreviated approach. The desired outcome was to identify factors which not only contribute to but also predict marital satisfaction. It is not surprising that a myriad of methods (interviews, rating scales, objective questions, and open-ended statements) were tried, each with varying degrees of success or failure. Each success or failure served as a meaningful reference to any researcher who attempted to grapple with the problem of marital satisfaction.

The same trial and error methods will hopefully prove successful in studying in-laws. The methodological barriers encountered during this study have provided this investigator with valuable insight as to the complexities of studying in-laws. It is hoped that they will prove themselves valuable in future study. One must expect to explore several alternative approaches when dealing with a multifaceted topic of study which sought to study one's entire family of in-laws. Most previous research dealt only with the mother-in-law, largely because she was almost consistently at the top of the list as most troublesome. But certainly not in all cases. Much of this is no doubt related to the negative stereotypes associated with her role, perpetuated in many respects by the media, jokes, and cartoons.

The real need for in-depth study of in-law relations was overwhelming. Hence, an experimental attempt was instigated to perhaps determine a viable approach to the problem. So as not to negate or disregard the present study, alterations in its composition and administration are suggested. Furthermore, it is this investigator's feeling that possibly alternative

approaches to the dynamics of in-law relations should be explored.

Recommendations for Future Study Based on the Present Study

Experience and knowledge gained from the study enables this investigator to, briefly, make the following recommendations: (1) Include the actual age of the respondent in the demographic items. (2) Ask the respondents to indicate all of their current classification (s) as an in-law (mother-in-law, sister-in-law, father-in-law, etc.). (3) Ask the respondents to indicate the number and classification of each of the in-law relations they currently have (e.g., two sisters-in-law, and/or one mother-in-law, and/or no father-in-law, etc.). (4) Because many people have more than one sister-in-law and/or brother-in-law, the respondents were unsure as to which one to refer to on the attitude scale, a situation which would bias the results. American kinship terms do not make distinctions between in-laws, as is true in other cultures. Therefore, reference to one's brother-in-law does not directly indicate the nature of the relationship. Other situations present the same research barrier: a now-deceased parent-in-law, opposing or ambivalent feelings toward parents-in-law (hate one, love the other), marital status of the parents-in-law, and the number of times the responding couple has been married. (5) For these and other reasons, this investigator is inclined to take the position that the interview method would be more sensitive to these family situations, as well as the inherent problem of kinship terminology. Personal interviews, given the necessary time and an adequate sample, would enable the researcher to delineate factors and situations which would possibly avert bias and contribute to investigative control. An attitude scale truly sensitive to the numerous possibilities of in-law relations could conceivably include over 300 items, in which case, very few people would be

willing to participate in the study.

Though admittedly time consuming for both investigator and respondent, it seems reasonable to say that a personal interview, using a reliable and valid instrument, would provide more accurate and useable data concerning in-law relations. It would also be able to take into account the myriad of intervening variables in adjusting to one's in-laws. Information gained from such a study would serwe as a valuable reference tool for counselors, family life educators, theorists, and married couples, in understanding these diverse relationships and possibly avoiding future conflicts.

Future Use of the Johnson In-Law Attitude Scale

The investigator plans to complete the study in the following ways: (1) The demographic questions will be reevaluated and the necessary additions and/or corrections made. (2) The items will be divided into two forms using established and reliable statistical procedures. (3) The investigator will consider dividing the total test into components, in this case, factors, which would be administered only in the case that a respondent actually has that particular in-law. A respondent would receive a separate sub-test for each in-law he or she has, and would indicate the relationship on each scale. This would markedly decrease the length of the scale in some circumstances. (4) The scale (s) will be administered to a broad random sample. (5) The data will be analyzed according to the discriminant function to test formal hypotheses. The information from the demographic questions would enable one to control for age, number of years married, education, age at time of marriage, etc. (6) Criterion-related validity will be established using a person's scores from another available instrument of in-law relations, or by using an independent variable. The latter would involve grouping subjects into

categories based on their subjective rating of their onw in-law relations as poor, good, or excellent. The correlation between these criteria and the Johnson In-Law Attitude Scale would indicate the extent to which this scale would predict the individual's score and thus establish criterion-related validity.

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